

To: Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Andrea Ferrucci, Executive Director, Mosaic Connecticut

Re: H.B. No. 6846 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS

Date: March 6, 2015

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Andrea Ferrucci, Executive Director of Mosaic in Connecticut. Mosaic has been providing high quality individualized services to Connecticut's adults with intellectual disabilities for 25 years. Throughout 20 communities in the state, Mosaic supports people with disabilities in a variety of residential and day arrangements. We are successful with the help of our well-trained professional staff who partner with each person we serve, their family members or guardians, and other important people in their lives.

I am here today to voice concerns about H.B. No. 6846 An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services Programs. The proposed budget would cut spending in every area of health and human services, including deep cuts to the Department of Developmental Services. These cuts will gut community-based programs like Mosaic's that serve the most vulnerable people in our state. Providers are already operating on limited funding, the result of repeated rescissions and chronic underfunding; this budget will push us over the edge.

The DDS budget has seen devastating reductions in the past few years, in particular to community-based programs for residential and day supports. The current proposed budget further slashes these critical services and supports for Connecticut's individuals with disabilities. The proposed reduction of nearly \$36 million across two years in Voluntary Services will decimate crucial services for families of children with intellectual disabilities. Representing a 60% reduction in the first year of biennium, this proposed reduction will cut off access to supports for behavioral challenges, activities of daily living, and many other needs.

In addition, the underfunding of Employment/Day and Community Residential Services will continue to undermine the provider system and put services for individuals with disabilities at risk. Employment/Day Services have already received cuts in recent years, with an additional \$5 million rescission this year. The proposed budget falls \$11 million below projected costs for the first year of the biennium, and \$19 million below for the second year. Community Residential Services have seen even more devastating cuts in recent years, most recently a \$10 million annualized rescission in the FY 15 budget. This resulted in a reduction in reimbursement rates to providers, despite rising costs. The current proposed budget falls \$4 million below projected costs for the first year of the biennium and \$12 million below for the second year.

Without funding the projected costs of service, providers will likely experience further reductions in reimbursements, pushing them to reduce service levels. Providers have already balanced their own budgets in the face of recent cuts on the backs of our employees – we can no longer afford to do this, and will now be forced to cut services instead. This is in the face of the state's waiting list for residential services, and ever-growing needs for employment/day supports.

Not only are community based services effective, they are economical. However, without rates of reimbursement based on the actual cost of services delivered, community providers cannot maintain viable business models. If this budget is adopted as is, we risk destabilizing the community based service system that so many of Connecticut's citizens rely on. We have experienced many difficult budgets in the past, but there has also always been an attempt to protect the lifesaving services that we deliver to our citizens. For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Appropriations Committee spare providers of services to individuals with disabilities any further cuts, so that we may continue to serve the needs of Connecticut's residents.

Thank you for attention to these critically important matters. I am happy to answer your questions or provide additional information.